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The strategic and operational dimensions of staff training and professional development for information professionals: What *neXus2* has revealed.

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Introduction

The world of digital information in which contemporary citizens live means that the library sector, as a key player in the management and delivery of information services, cannot ignore the reality and the impact of its own dynamic environment. Clearly, the pace of change correlates directly with the increasing need imperative for staff development. People working in the library and information services (LIS) sector cannot be allowed to conclude their academic studies and then 'stagnate'; they should be offered regular opportunities for ongoing professional growth. Several authors of the guidance texts for new LIS professionals stress the imperative of career-long learning (MacLennan, 2004; Schontz, 2004; Myburgh, 2005; Gordon, 2006; Heye, 2006).

...staying relevant to the library and information science profession, as well as to our personal and organizational goals, is part of a regular, ongoing process. It begins at the start of your career, or even earlier, I think, with the idea of *becoming* a librarian or information professional, and progresses across a series of educational, training and practical work opportunities that lead to new and continuing opportunities for lifelong learning in what is, after all, a dynamic and ever-changing profession... 'Staying relevant' means we never stop 'becoming' or evolving in our roles as librarians.

(MacLennan, 2004, p,312)

In this year's Boyer Lectures, Rupert Murdoch argued that "as technology advances, the premium for educated people with talent and judgment will increase. In the future, successful workers will be those who embrace a lifetime of learning. Those who don't will be left behind" (Murdoch, 2008). Indeed, research in the field of human resources development has indicated that effective staff training can result in tangible results for the organisation, including increased productivity, better quality work produced, lower supervisory costs and higher levels employee satisfaction and retention (Bassi, Ludwig, McMurrer and Van Buren, 2000).

In the context of the LIS workforce in Australia, the topic of staff development forms part of the focus of the *neXus2* study. The *neXus2* project has been funded by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the consortium of National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA). It builds on earlier research work, the *neXus* census (Hallam, 2008) which looked at the demographic, educational and career perspectives of individual library and information professionals, to critically examine institutional policies and practices associated with the LIS workforce. The research aims to help develop a clearer understanding of the issues impacting on workforce sustainability, workforce capability and workforce optimisation. This paper presents the research findings relating to training and professional development, in order to measure the scope and distribution

of training activities across the LIS workforce, to consider the interrelationship between the strategic and operational dimensions of staff development in individual institutions and to analyse the common and distinctive factors evident in the different sectors of the profession.

Earlier research work had been undertaken by Ian Smith who examined the patterns of staff development activity, which he refers to as Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning (CPD&WL), in Australian academic libraries through the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), State Libraries, the National Library and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Library Network (Smith, 2002), with a further comparative study of academic libraries in Australia and the United Kingdom (Smith, 2006). Smith reported that the initial survey work was informed by two earlier studies into professional development for librarians (Trask, 1983; Gray, 1986). The present study therefore builds on and extends these studies, to also consider library and information services within the public library, TAFE library, special library and school library sectors. A full analysis of the research data will be presented in the *neXus2* final report (Hallam, in press).

Research methods

The research approach for *neXus2* required the active participation of library management in order to obtain data at the organisational level. While *neXus1* sought respondents via the general LIS e-lists, a more targeted approach was used in *neXus2*, with the invitation to participate distributed through coordinating agencies such as NSLA, Public Libraries Australia (PLA), the Australian Law Librarians' Association (ALLA) etc, or directly to the university librarian or chief executive officer of large libraries. An extensive online survey was made available to respondents from late March to mid April 2008, with some late submissions received at the end of April. One single response was to be submitted by each organisation that participated in the research, with the institutional data compiled by representatives of the senior management team or human resources/staff development personnel. Importantly, the project is aligned with similar international studies, allowing the data collected to be compared and contrasted with LIS workforce policy and practice across several different countries. The preparation of the current paper therefore coincides with the in-depth analysis of the research data, which will feed into a formal report to be published later in 2008.

The *neXus2* survey involved four separate questionnaires, to collect data on organisation-specific statistics about the number and types of staff; on recruitment and retention policies and practices; on staff development activities; and on succession planning. The instrument was piloted with members of CAVAL, the consortium of academic libraries predominantly located in the State of Victoria. In the invitation to participate, respondents were asked to request a Survey Identification Code as the first step. This allowed the research team to manage the different parts of the survey and correctly link each submission to the relevant institution. The survey could be printed as work sheets to collect and collate the data offline, prior to entering the data online as part of the survey submission process. Senior management of the library organisations were encouraged to use the project as an opportunity for discussion and reflection on professional issues within their own organisation. Importantly, the rich qualitative information provided in response to some of the questions is of significant value for the profession at large.

A total of 191 institutions requested the Survey Identification Code, although there were a few instances of initial duplication by staff at the same institution. While the survey was open, there was regular and open correspondence with many of the potential respondents, principally to provide some latitude with survey submission deadlines, given the complexity of the data collection. A number of people did contact the research team to indicate that the task was more demanding than they had anticipated, that there were significant reasons that restricted the opportunity to collect the data (eg library relocation; overseas travel etc), or that the staff were already stretched and stressed, so that ultimately it was decided that the institution would not to participate in the project.

Research findings

The final number of respondents was 101, with 82% completing all four parts of the survey. 10 respondents submitted only one questionnaire, two respondents submitted two questionnaires, while seven respondents submitted three of the four parts. Of the 101 respondents, five of the respondents represented the National Library of Australian and four of the State Libraries; 22 were public libraries; 20 were university libraries; eight were libraries in colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). There were also 34 special library respondents drawn from the legal sector (10), Federal government (10), State and Territory government (6), the health sector (7) and the corporate sector (1). In addition, there were 11 school libraries, with 2 government schools and 9 private schools responding.

An overview of the respondents by sector is presented graphically in Figure 1. About one third of all respondents were drawn from the special library sector, with subgroupings of Federal and State/Territory special libraries, law libraries and health libraries.

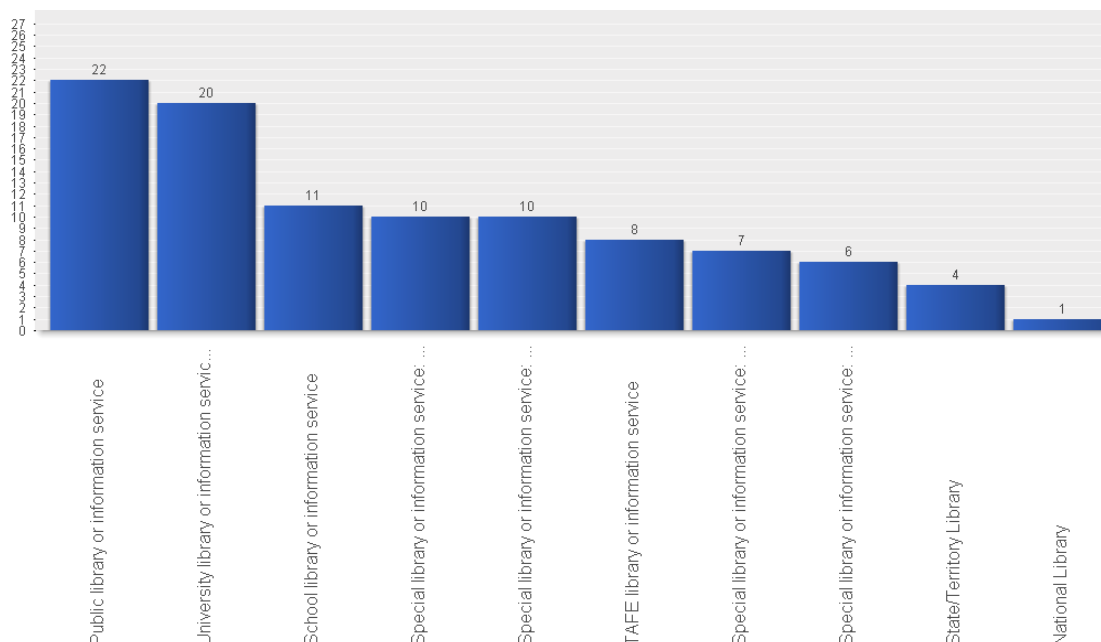


Figure 1: All respondents by LIS sector

In this paper, the focus is specifically on the data captured in Part 3 of the *neXus2* survey, which considered the institutional policies and practices associated with staff training and professional development.

The strategic value of staff development in libraries

It was found that, overall, almost two thirds of libraries had a planned staff development program, while one third reported that the organisation had adopted an informal approach. A very small number of respondents indicated that staff development was the responsibility of the individual staff member: this situation was primarily evident in public libraries (6%) and special libraries (4%). The formal, planned approach to staff development was most prevalent in the academic library and NSLA sectors (80%), whereas the public library and school library sector were the most likely to have an informal program (44%).

The research sought to determine the degree to which staff development was viewed strategically within the organisation. 82% of all respondents indicated that the library had a strategic planning document, as seen in 100% of NSLA and TAFE libraries, and 90% of academic libraries, while about one quarter of special libraries and school libraries reported that they had no strategic plan. Of the respondents that did have a strategic plan, half reported that staff development was given high priority. 60% of the NSLA members and academic libraries stressed that staff development was a high priority, although this actually indicates a drop from the figure of around 80% reported in earlier studies (Smith 2006). About 12% stated that staff development was only low priority or, indeed, not considered at all.

The strategic effectiveness of staff development was evaluated by 39% of all respondents, with academic and TAFE libraries the most likely to conduct an evaluation (around 55%), whereas public libraries were the least likely to do so (22%). Where the strategic effectiveness was evaluated, only 29% of respondents reported that the evaluation considered the return on the organisation's investment in staff development. In the commercial world, while Bassi et al (2000) have alerted corporations to the positive impact staff training can have on the financial bottom line (bearing in mind the need to consider quality of training as well as quantity of training, they point out the inevitable challenges: "...while many managers believe in the growing importance of investing in skills through formal and informal training, existing accounting and other structures mean that most organizations are unable to adequately measure, report, and evaluate these key investments" (p.2). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that across the LIS sector as a whole, over 90% of library institutions do not focus on the return on their investment in staff training. However, a number of comments were submitted by respondents to indicate that it would be more than sensible to do so:

We are still in the infancy of this program.

Something we should do.

Intend to but haven't to date.

Other respondents suggested that they were in the process of improving their processes:

Not quantitatively measured in any formal way. We would like to put in a more formal process over the next 2 years.

Has recently undergone review from external provider and is currently assessing recommendations and implementing improvements.

One respondent highlighted that an informal correlation was made between staff development and business outcomes, arguing that if the business targets were achieved, then it was assumed that the staff had the required level and range of skills; on the other hand, where business needs were not met, then a lack of staff training may be considered a causal factor.

In terms of institutional evaluation activities, two thirds of respondents indicated that they engaged in the measurement of the quality of the library services. The most common tool for service evaluation was Insync (formerly Rodski), used by 60% of academic libraries. A further 20% of academic libraries utilised LibQual+. 42% of all respondents used alternative approaches, such as 'home grown' surveys, focus groups, customer feedback and so on. The majority of activities were run on as an internal process, although some respondents reported that they used the services of consultants to support the evaluation work or that it was part of a program coordinated by, for example, the State Library, as was reported by some public libraries. It was noted that there was considerable diversity in the frequency of the evaluation work, with a number recording annual service quality appraisal, others every two years or every three years, and others again on a purely ad hoc basis. While some comments were provided to highlight the collection of quantitative data that considered transaction metrics rather than qualitative data, as it was easier to capture, others comments communicated the value of the process:

The [LibQual+] survey is used widely and allows for benchmarking. We will continue to use this survey. The results have been used to improve services.

There is a regular evaluation program derived from quantitative and qualitative instruments and involving different modes, including interviews, focus groups and online surveys. Each year at least one major service is the subject of independent market research. Other measures of service quality, such as compliance with the provisions of our service charter, are measured and reported quarterly. Library staff also engage in ongoing informal evaluations, such as through convening focus groups of users on particular topics. Formal complaints and compliments are reported and monitored.

Only one academic library did not conduct a service evaluation, which compared starkly with other sectors: two thirds of school libraries and around 40% of public, NSLA and special libraries reported that they did not utilise any tools for evaluating their services.

The organisations that did measure service quality tended to draw on the data collected to determine staff development objectives: with around two thirds of these respondents, and 80% of the relevant academic library respondents reporting that this was the case. The public library sector was more reticent, however, with almost half of the institutions that actually did undertake service evaluation failing to link it to staff development issues. For some respondents the question was hypothetical: service evaluations they had undertaken had underscored the very positive views of customers and clients. The need for intervention through staff development to improve service would only be required if

significant negative issues were revealed through the Insync, LibQual+ and/or internal review processes.

Nothing has come out of the results so far indicating a need for staff to develop skills/knowledge.

To date, client satisfaction with our professional services is very high. But if results show a fall, this data would be used to argue for more staff development.

The opportunity offered by the survey process to identify staff development needs was nevertheless acknowledged by some respondents:

Staff development needs have been identified through survey responses.

If particular services or subject areas are specified, training for staff will be arranged to meet these needs.

It was noted, however, that there was little evidence of an ongoing continuous improvement process: only 13% of respondents reported that they sought to consider the staff development activities that had been planned in response to an initial service evaluation, to then measure the impact on the next round of performance ratings achieved in subsequent service quality evaluations. Around 20% of the respondents from the NSLA, academic and special library sectors found it valuable to engage in monitoring progress over time.

The staff development policy and planning process

The *neXus2* questionnaire sought to explore the extent to which libraries had both formal staff development policies and staff development plans, as well as the diverse approaches to managing these. Smith underscored the importance of staff development policy documents “because they formalize and actively state organisational commitment to staff development, give clear guidelines to staff members on the terms and conditions of organisational support for CPD&WL and set out the obligations on the part of staff members who are recipients of such support” (2006, p.3). Smith reported that the 2001 survey revealed that 91% of “larger” libraries (ie with 130 FTE staff or more), which would have included the equivalent cohorts of the NSLA libraries and the majority of academic libraries, had some form of human resources development policy. In the *neXus2* study, however, the only 52% of all respondents indicated that they had a formal policy that encompassed their staff development activities. This was most prevalent in academic libraries (75%), compared with about 60% of NSLA, TAFE and special libraries. The lowest figure was recorded by public libraries, at 28%. Respondents commented that, very often, the policy was developed and administered by the parent or host institution, ie at the local council or university level, rather than being library-centric.

It was found that libraries were far more likely to have a staff development manager (50%) than a staff development committee (17%). Some respondents reported that the staff development manager was a role at the institutional level, as part of the central administration, while others indicated that in fact individual line managers had responsibility for determining staff training requirements. Almost 40% of respondents highlighted the shared role for staff development, with a staff development manager working directly with area managers. This situation was reported by almost 60% of academic and TAFE library respondents. Where there was a staff development

committee, the committee usually reported to the senior or executive management team, although in larger institutions there might be an interim layer of a human resources or organisational development manager. The vast majority of staff development committees had a defined role statement or terms of reference, which respondents were happy to release to the project team to support further in-depth analysis.

The findings revealed that staff development plans were less common than staff development policies: only about a quarter of respondent libraries reported that there was a formal plan, which contrasted, however, with about three quarters of the TAFE library respondents. The staff training plans were generally developed as part of the strategic planning/operational planning process, in close consultation with staff and managers through the performance management activities. Some respondents reported that guidance and direction was offered by a staff capability framework, a strategic workforce plan or a talent and succession planning program. Dissemination of the staff development plan may be centralised, with publication in policy and procedure manuals or electronically on the intranet/website, or the general document may be tailored for individual employees and placed on their staff files to be discussed during performance appraisal meetings, thus becoming active documents relevant to the staff but also fed back into the overall workforce plan. One respondent highlighted the interaction with staff through various communication processes: "through library wide email, staff bulletin, roadshows, information day". This contrasted with some other contexts where there was apparently little engagement with the plan, with staff 'disinterested'.

One survey question which asked about the review or evaluation of the staff development plan resulted in a high null response rate (69%). Those who did respond either reported that the plan was reviewed every six or 12 months, in conjunction with the review of achievement of key performance indicators and/or future budget needs, or alternatively, that there was in fact no real evaluation process.

In the context of financial planning, it was not unsurprising to find that the vast majority of libraries (83%) had a specific budget allocation for their staff development activities. This was reflected in the response of 100% for NSLA, TAFE and school libraries and 90% of academic libraries. The greatest degree of uncertainty was evident with special libraries: 19% were unsure about their situation. The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) has reported that, in the USA, the expenditure on training and development has remained stable in recent years at about 2.3% of total payroll, and those organizations rewarded for 'best practice' in staff development allocated over 3% of total payroll to training of staff. In the Australian LIS sector it was found that there was a considerable range of responses across the spectrum of the quantum of the budget allocation, as a percentage of total payroll. There was a null response rate of 25%; the actual responses ranged from 0.0%-0.4% through to 2.6%-3.0% of the payroll (Figure 2). In 46% of the cases, the value of staff development expenditure was less than 1% of the total payroll, while in 8% of the cases, the value was over 2% of total payroll.

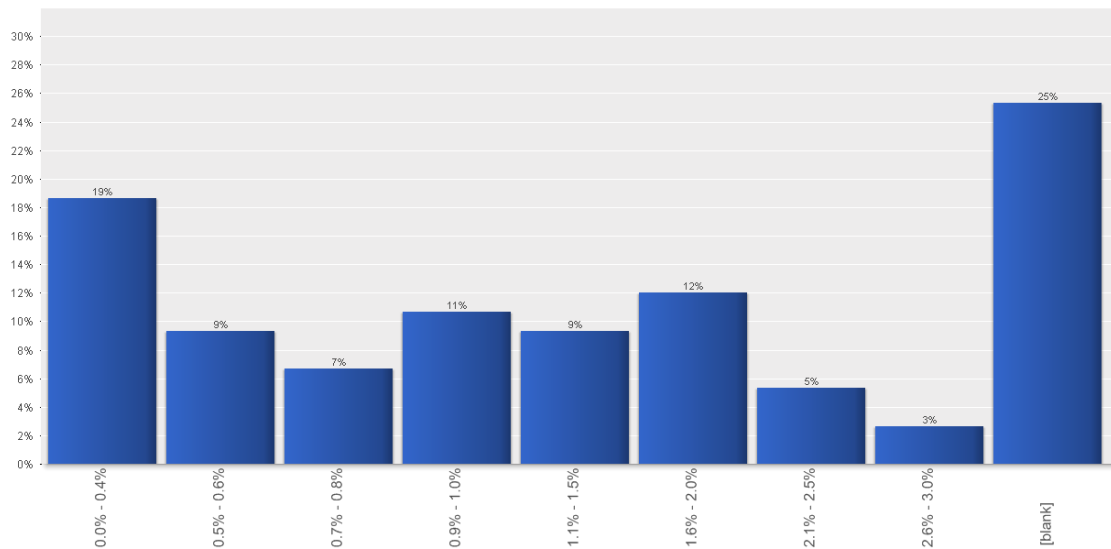


Figure 2: Budget allocation for staff development as quantum of total payroll, all respondents

Taking the TAFE library sector as one specific example, where one might expect some degree of consistency, there was in fact a very even spread of responses across the different categories (Figure 3).

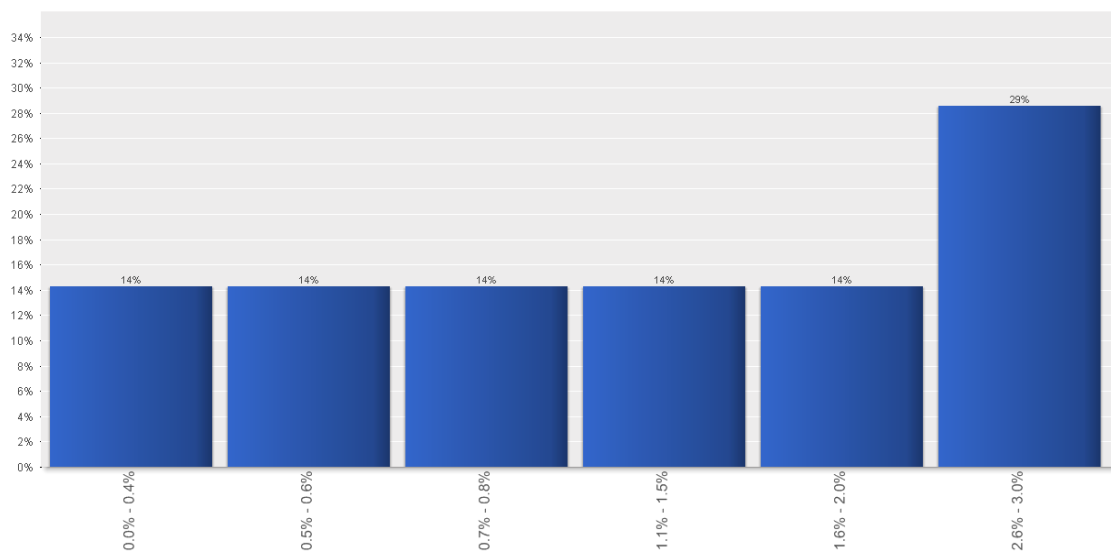


Figure 3: Budget allocation for staff development as quantum of total payroll, TAFE respondents

In contrast, the NSLA members probably represented the 'simplest model', with the distribution of expenditure on staff training spread across the relatively narrow range of 1.1% to 2.5% (Figure 4). Nevertheless, it can be argued that there is a considerable difference, when translated into the actual figures of the payroll for 'large' libraries with over 100 FTE, between 1.1% and 2.5% of total payroll.

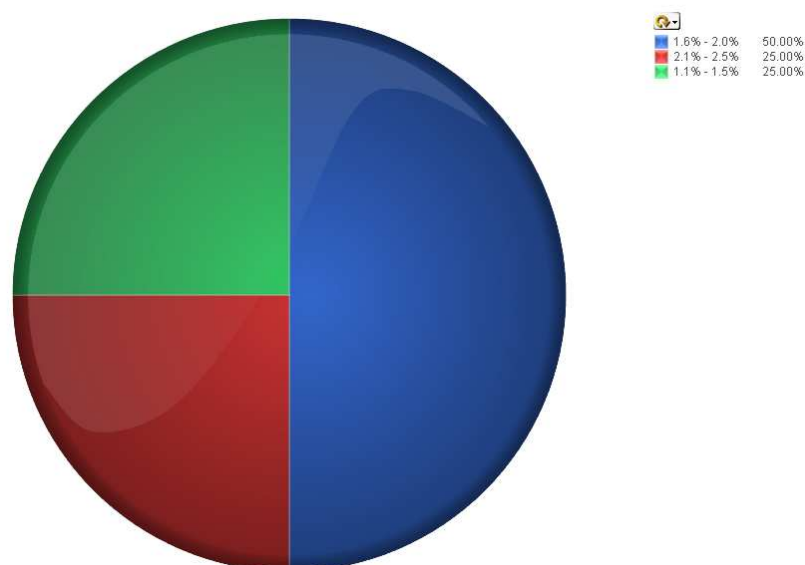


Figure 4: Budget allocation for staff development as quantum of total payroll, NSLA respondents

There was considerable diversity in funding practice, with some respondents stating that the travel component, eg for international travel, was budgeted for separately, while others indicated that the staff development budget per se was only to cover external training needs, with the institution providing a wide range of internal training opportunities to the library staff at no cost.

Employee involvement in staff development activities

One issue of interest was the amount of time that the employees of different institutions spent in staff development activities each year. Once again, there was evidence of a considerable range, with 4% of all respondents reporting that the time spent was less than 5 hours per annum, and 5% reporting that the figure was over 40 hours per annum (Figure 5). It was noted that there was also a degree of uncertainty: 21% of all respondents, 28% of public library respondents and 25% of academic library respondents were unsure of the actual time spent.

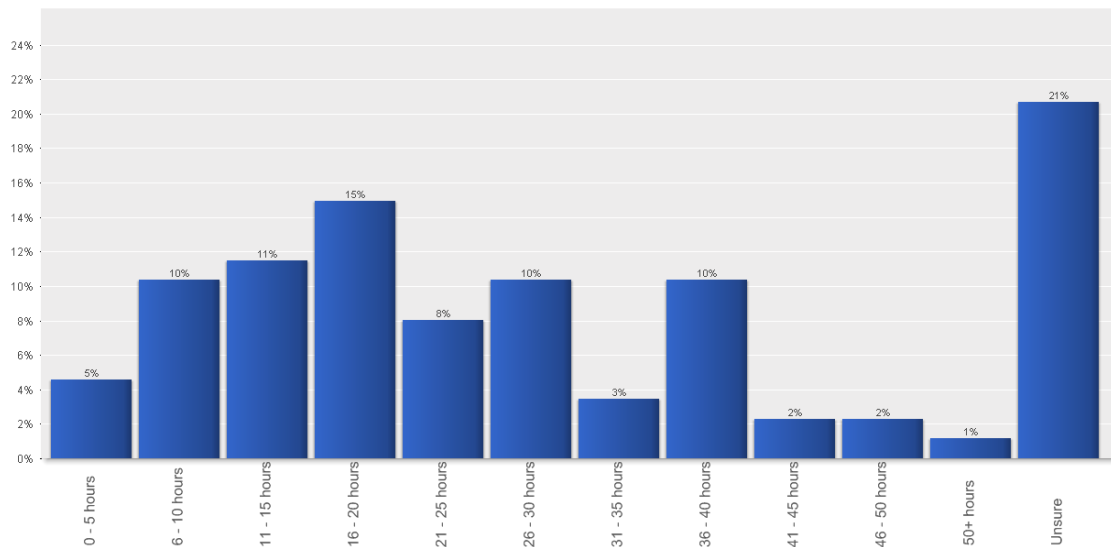


Figure 5: Average hours per annum that individual staff members spend in staff development activities, all respondents

Almost 40% of the special library sector reported that staff spent over 30 hours per annum in staff training activities, which compared with 6% of public libraries, 14% of TAFE libraries and 15% of academic libraries. 57% of TAFE library respondents indicated that the figure per staff member was less than 15 hours, or 2 full working days, per year. One example of the difference in practice within a narrow context can be shown in the figures for the NSLA members: the respondents all fell into the categories 11-15 hours, 16-20 hours and 21-25 hours per year (Figure 6).

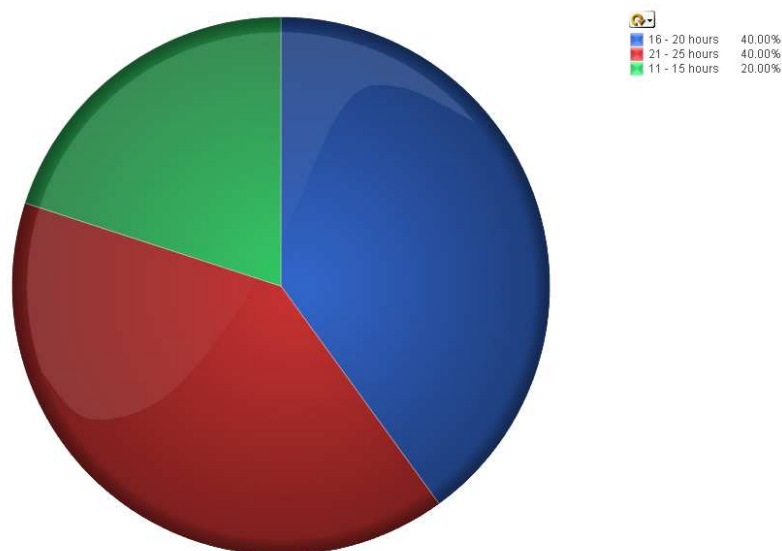


Figure 6: Average hours per annum that individual staff members spend in staff development activities, NSLA respondents

A series of questions was posed to consider the distribution of staff development across the different cohorts of staff employed in the library and information service, for example professional staff, paraprofessional staff, new graduates, middle and senior management, as well as those employed in specific areas, such as public services, technical services or IT/systems. Overall, 65% of respondents indicated that over 75% of the professional staff would undertake staff development activities each year (Figure 7).

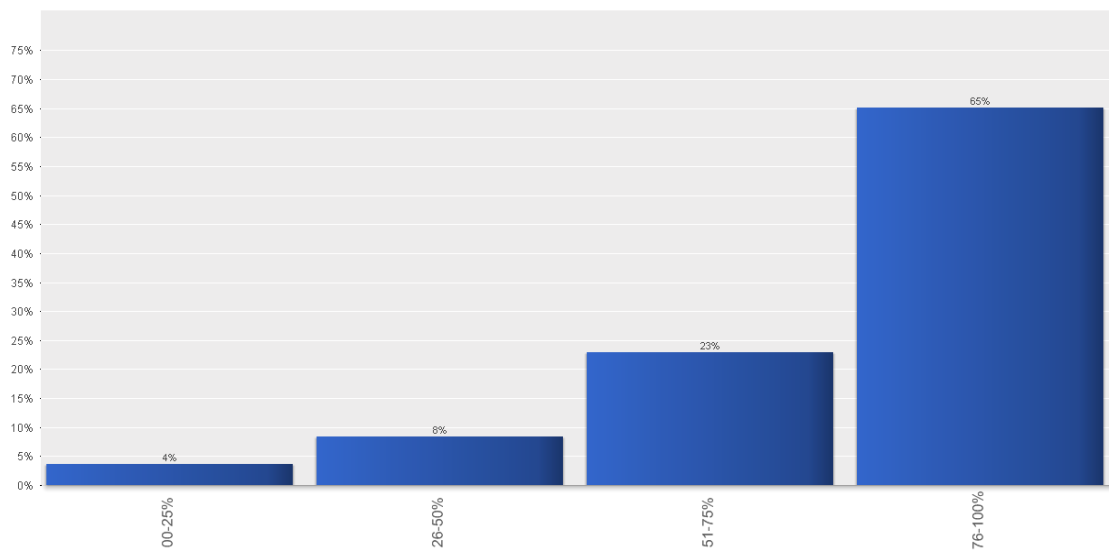


Figure 7: Percentage of professional LIS staff who undertake staff development activities each year

The highest figure of 85% was recorded by special library respondents, thus ensuring most professional LIS staff in that LIS sector attended training; while only 40% of NLSA members stated that as many as three quarters of their professional staff would receive training each year. A quarter of school library respondents reported that less than 25% of their professional LIS staff would actually attend staff development activities in a given year.

The figures were similar for paraprofessional staff, although there was a 24% null response rate for the question. The data captured did reveal, however, that 20% of respondents reported that less than half of their paraprofessional staff would have the opportunity to attend training events each year (Figure 8)..

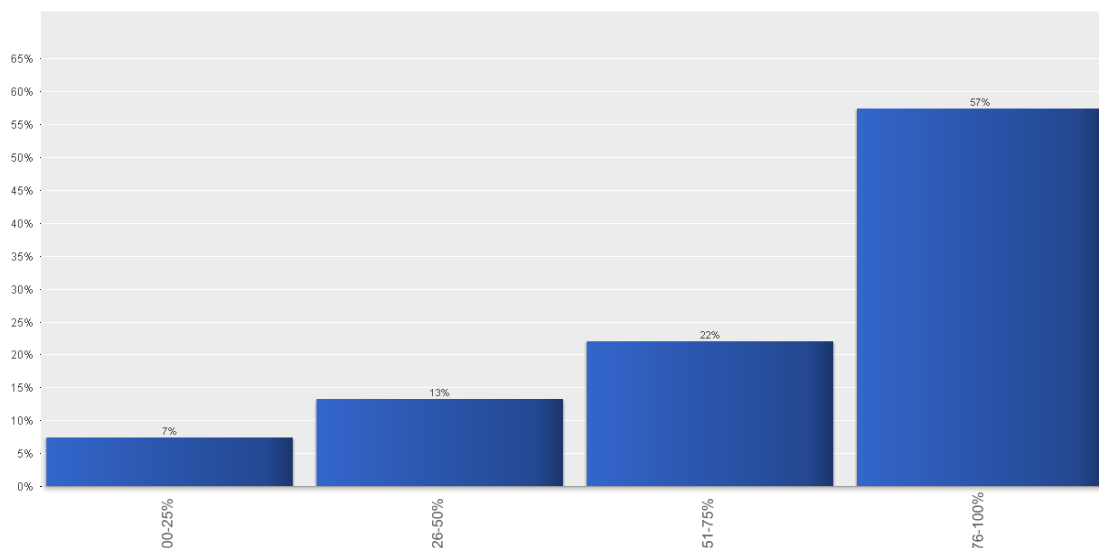


Figure 8: Percentage of paraprofessional LIS staff who undertake staff development activities each year

It was also noted that IT/systems staff were more likely, as a cohort, to receive staff development than public services or technical services staff. Two thirds of respondents reported that over 75% of IT/systems staff attended training, which compared with half the respondents stating that this was the case of public services and technical services staff. 33% of academic library respondents indicated that less than half of their technical services staff had the opportunity for staff development each year.

Most library institutions acknowledged that they had a routine method for determining staff training needs (68%), with the regular performance review process the most common avenue, frequently linked back to the institution's own business planning cycles. Some smaller libraries noted, however, that the majority of staff development funds were absorbed by the manager's development program, due to the international nature of the events attended and/or the manager's involvement in professional activities such as ALIA or ALLA.

A series of questions was posed to consider the relative need for ongoing training across the different groups of employees, in order to determine whether respondents felt they could prioritise the developmental needs. Respondents were asked to indicate whether training was required 'to a great extent', 'to some extent', 'to a minor extent', or 'not at all', with the further option to remain 'neutral'. It was found that in most cases there was a strong recognition of the need for training amongst both professional staff and paraprofessional staff, although the voice for 'to some extent' was louder than the voice for 'to a great extent', with 40% believing ongoing development was an issue of real concern for the profession (Table 1).

Table 1: The need for ongoing staff development, professional LIS staff and paraprofessional LIS staff

	Professional LIS staff	Paraprofessional LIS staff
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Neutral	0%	3%
Not at all	1%	1%
To a minor extent	10%	5%
To some extent	48%	50%
To a great extent	40%	41%

Respondents acknowledged that new graduates had a clear need for ongoing training, certainly in comparison with upper level professional staff (Table 2). Nevertheless, 20% of respondents reported that less than half of the new graduates employed at their institution would actually attend training each year.

Table 2: The need for ongoing staff development, new graduates and upper level professional staff

	New graduate staff	Upper level professional staff
Neutral	0%	4%
Not at all	0%	0%
To a minor extent	2%	4%
To some extent	28%	42%
To a great extent	70%	51%

Discrepancies between the need for staff development and the reality of staff development were therefore apparent when responses were compared.

The focus of professional development

At a high level, the survey sought to determine the extent to which the amount of staff development in the institution had changed over the past five years. Over half the respondents reported that the need for staff development had increased (Figure 9).

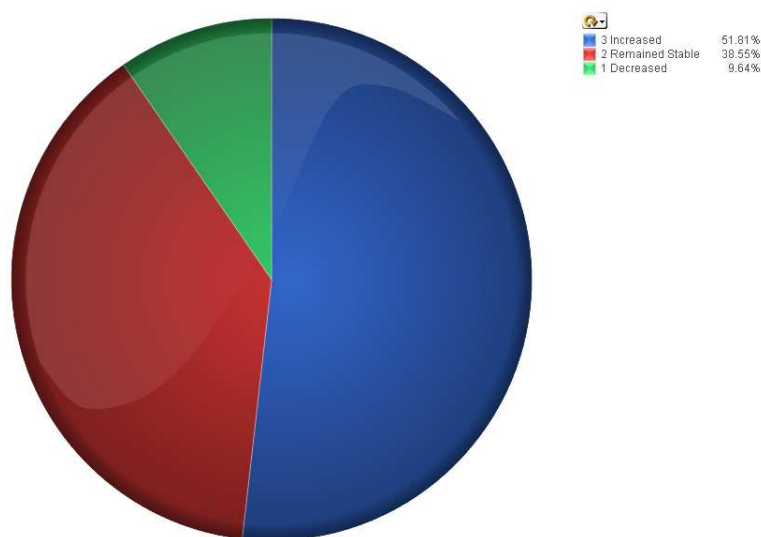


Figure 9: Extent to which the amount of staff development had changed over the past 5 years

This builds on Smith's earlier findings in the 2001 and 2005 surveys that the need for CPD&WL activities was increasing (2006). In the *neXus2* study, both public and academic library respondents felt that the change was significant (around 60% increase), compared with 29% of TAFE library respondents. It was noteworthy, however, that 43% of this TAFE cohort actually felt that the need for training had decreased over the given period, compared with only 4%-6% of academic, public and special library respondents. There was an opportunity to provide narrative comments: a few views were expressed to indicate that budget restrictions had had a negative impact on the amount of staff training opportunities available, while other comments indicated that there was a challenge to have staff actually accept the opportunities made available to them. There was clear recognition (61% of all respondents) that the increased use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in the LIS sector had had a major impact on the institution's staff development program, with a stronger sensitivity to the changes amongst NSLA, public library, academic and TAFE libraries (70%-80%) than in special or school libraries (45%). These figures were, however, lower than those reported earlier by Smith, who found 90% of his respondents reported that the increased use of information technology (IT) had resulted in a greater need to train the staff in the use of IT applications (2002).

Respondents were asked about the focus of training and development events, offered either internally or externally, that featured in and were funded as part of the organisation's staff development program, on the basis of 'regularly', 'occasionally' or 'never'. Smith had stressed the value of internal programs: "By involving staff members in a process of actively passing on their skills to others the trainers themselves may gain a benefit – extending their own skills and ability through the process of training and developing others (2006, p.3f.). It was noted, however, that there was a lack of granularity in the *neXus2* data, specifically in the interpretation of the terms 'occasionally' and 'regularly'; nevertheless an overall impression could be gained from the responses. The responses could be compared to determine the extent to which there might be any similarities or differences across the different LIS sectors.

The types of activities included:

- Orientation/induction programs
- Attendance at conferences
- Attendance at pre- or post- conference workshops
- External study courses (diploma, degree etc)
- In-house short courses with internal trainers
- In-house short courses with external trainers
- External short courses
- Seminars/workshops
- In-service training programs
- On-the-job training programs
- Work shadowing programs
- Internal mentoring programs
- Informal work buddy schemes
- External mentoring programs
- Job exchanges within the organisation
- Staff exchanges with other organisations

- Attendance at continuing professional development events
- Online continuing professional development programs
- Visits to other library and information services
- Time allowed for research work as part of duties
- Reports of research work in progress and/or completed
- Support for publication
- Guest speakers
- Sabbatical/research leave.

Of the programs offered internally, orientation or induction programs were the most commonly attended (82% of all respondents). School libraries were the least likely to offer induction programs, with 33% recording 'regularly' and 56% 'occasionally', which compared unfavourably with the figure of 95% 'regularly' for academic libraries. 14% of TAFE library and 6% of public library respondents indicated, however, that induction programs were 'never' offered.

Across the board, the principal events that were 'regularly' funded included conferences (64%), in-house short courses with internal workshops (63%), seminars and/or workshops (60%) and on-the job-training programs (60%). Attendance at conferences was strongly supported by NSLA respondents (100%) and academic library respondents (90%), while the figure was only 43% for TAFE library respondents and 50% for special library respondents. Academic librarians were by far the most likely to attend pre- or post-conference workshops (70%), compared with the overall figure of 37%. On-the-job training programs were favoured by academic libraries (85%) and public libraries (78%), but were scarce amongst school libraries (11%). There were clear differences between academic libraries and TAFE libraries: while 95% universities would regularly support seminars and workshops, the figure for TAFE colleges was only 29%.

While, informal work buddy schemes were more popular in public libraries (44%) than in special libraries (4%), the TAFE library sector supported internal mentoring programs (43%), which was double the level of interest in other LIS sectors. NSLA members were the only cohort to 'regularly' be involved in external mentoring programs (20%), with the remaining 80% 'occasionally' being involved. 65% of academic libraries also participated in external mentoring programs 'occasionally'. Job exchanges within the organisation were reported as 'occasional' in academic libraries (65%), TAFE libraries (57%) and NSLA (60%), with the remaining 20% of NSLA libraries engaging 'regularly' in internal job exchanges. The NSLA members were also the most likely group to 'occasionally' offer job exchanges with other organisations (80%), compared with 50% of academic libraries. Only 6% of public libraries indicated, however, that there were 'regular' external job exchanges. Visits to other libraries were undertaken by all cohorts of respondents, although more often by the staff of NSLA and academic libraries. Guest speakers were more likely to feature in the larger libraries, such as NSLA (60%) and academic libraries (30%).

The greatest level of support for research work, as part of staff duties, was evident in NSLA libraries (60% regularly, 40% occasionally); indeed even in academic libraries, the regular support for research work was noted by only 15% of respondents. Reports on research work were least likely in public libraries, with only 6% stating 'regularly' and 67% 'never'. Sabbatical or research leave was also highly unlikely to be supported in public libraries (78% 'never'), although the figure for academic libraries was very close at 75% 'never'. NSLA was the most supportive group for research leave (20% 'regularly')

and 40% occasionally'). Overall, the least supported training activities were consequently found to be sabbatical or research leave (66% 'never'), staff exchanges with other organisations (52% never) and external mentoring programs (49% 'never').

The survey drilled further to identify the topics of training programs that were attended by staff, offered both internally and externally. The high level topics included:

- Job-oriented skills training (excluding technology)
- Technology skills training
- Customer-service related training
- Management training
- Leadership training
- Other professional development (eg subject speciality, library issues)
- Personal or career development.

The topics that were more likely to be offered as external programs were management and leadership training and the alternative professional development areas such as subject specialties or library issues. Job-oriented skills, technology skills and customer-service related training were more commonly offered as internal programs. There was nevertheless a degree of overlap, with some of the general external programs also offered on an internal basis and vice versa.

60% of NSLA respondents indicated that staff were 'regularly' involved in job-oriented skills and technology skills training, compared with 22% of school library staff. Only 15% of special library respondents reported 'regularly' attending technology skills events, although 69% indicated they may 'occasionally' attend. Almost 40% of public libraries 'regularly' supported customer-service training events, which contrasted starkly with the special library figure of 8%. While 33% school library respondents reported that they would 'occasionally' attend, none would 'regularly' receive customer-service training. NSLA respondents were the most likely to support management training and leadership training, with both external and internal programs supported. Perhaps not surprisingly, special librarians recorded the highest figure for other professional development such as subject specialties, reflecting the actual focus of 'special' libraries, particularly when offered externally.

There was greater support for personal or career development amongst respondents in the NSLA and academic library sectors, than amongst those in public or school libraries, with more than half of these cohorts indicating there would be no support for an internally offered course, and more than a quarter reporting no support for externally offered events. Indeed, more than half of school librarians reported that there would also 'never' be support for management or leadership training. The topic areas most commonly available to school librarians were internally offered job-oriented skills (56% 'occasionally' and 11% 'regularly') and technology skills (89% 'occasionally'), along with external technology skills programs (67% 'occasionally' and 22% 'regularly'). Overall, it was found that the NSLA and academic library sectors were the most supportive of staff development activities across the spread of topics.

Respondents were invited to provide further details of topic areas not covered by the survey questions. Internal issues such as occupational health and safety, institutional codes of conduct, legal compliance and cultural awareness were listed, as well as a few reports on wellness programs such as yoga, pilates, massage and sports activities. It was interesting to note that while 'collections' might be considered central to library

activity, 'people' and 'technology' featured the most strongly in the responses to the current themes for training and the ones planned for the next two to three years: customer service, management and leadership development, change management, workforce and succession planning, emerging technologies and Web 2.0 were the recurrent ideas.

Institutional support for staff development

It was found that 99% of institutional respondents felt that their organisation encouraged and supported staff members' development activities. Most LIS sectors recorded a response rate of 100% for the question, with only public libraries dipping, as 6% reported that their institution was not supportive. The employers' perspective is perhaps more positive than the individual responses captured in the *neXus1* study (Hallam, 2008), where there were a number of more cynical comments about the employers' perspectives on training, highlighting that some respondents felt that their employers did actually not care about staff development.

There was, however, a lack of uniformity in the extent to which the direct and indirect costs of external staff development activities were supported. The majority of respondents (93%) reported that PD was covered by paid staff time, although it was reported that some LIS staff were expected to attend training events in their own (non-paid) time, ie special libraries (12%), school libraries (11%) and public libraries (6%). One respondent noted that most LIS staff at their institution would only get to go a product demonstration in paid staff time. Similar figures were recorded in terms of the institution covering the cost of course fees or registration costs, while travel costs were more likely to be paid by academic, TAFE and NSLA libraries; almost a quarter of public library respondents indicated that travel costs were not paid by the institution.

It was found that institutions were more likely to offer time off to staff who were enrolled in formal education programs (eg university or TAFE courses), although it was noted that students attending face-to-face classes were treated more generously than staff studying a distance education or online course. 71% of all respondents gave time off to attend class (Figure 10), compared with 58% allowing study time for distance or online learning (Figure 11). Academic and NSLA libraries were the most supportive in both education contexts: for face-to-face courses, 100% of NSLA and 90% of academic libraries granted staff the time, compared with 80% of NSLA and 75% of academic libraries supporting study time for distance learning. The least supportive cohorts were school libraries and TAFE libraries.

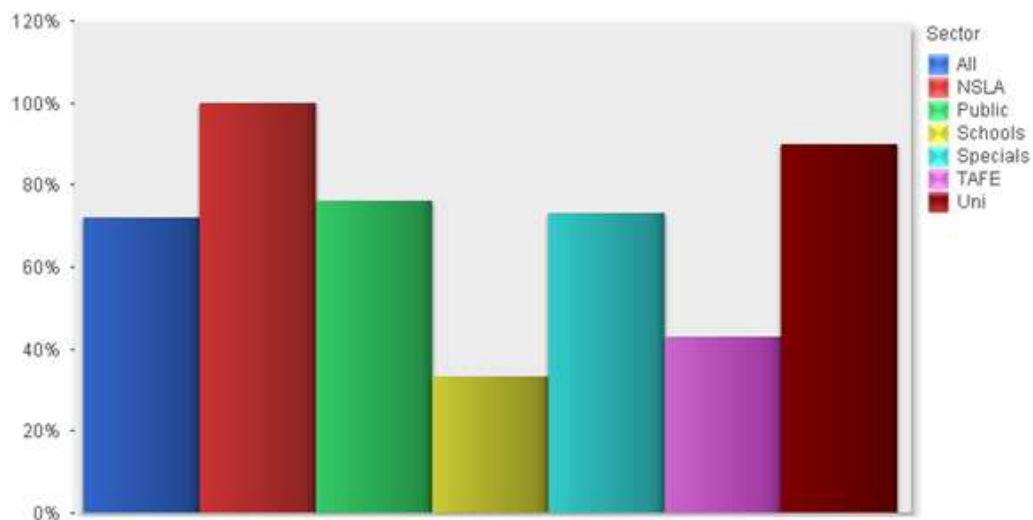


Figure 10: Institution offers staff time off to attend classes

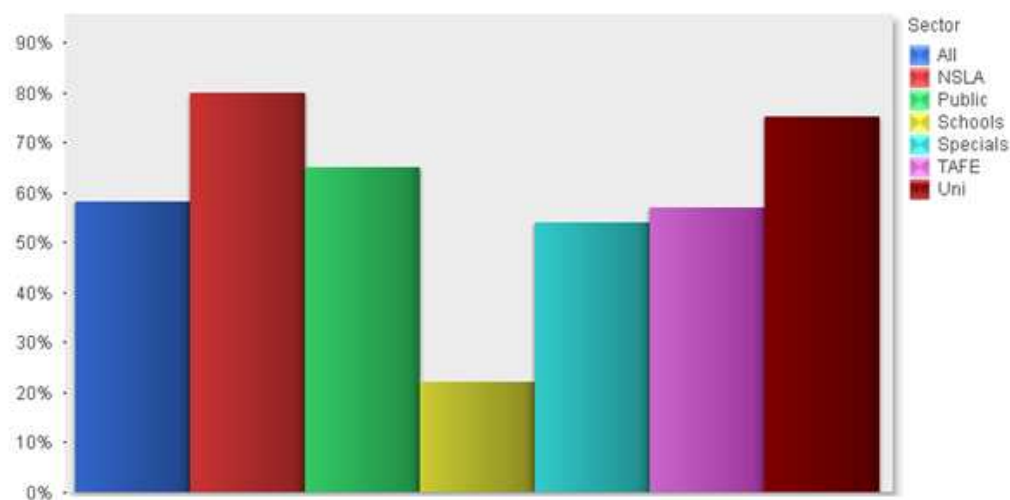


Figure 11: Institution offers time off for staff enrolled in distance education program/online course

Only 44% of respondents reported that academic or TAFE course fees would be paid by the institution, with almost two thirds of public, NSLA and academic libraries offering funding, compared with less than one third of TAFE, special and school libraries (Figure 12).

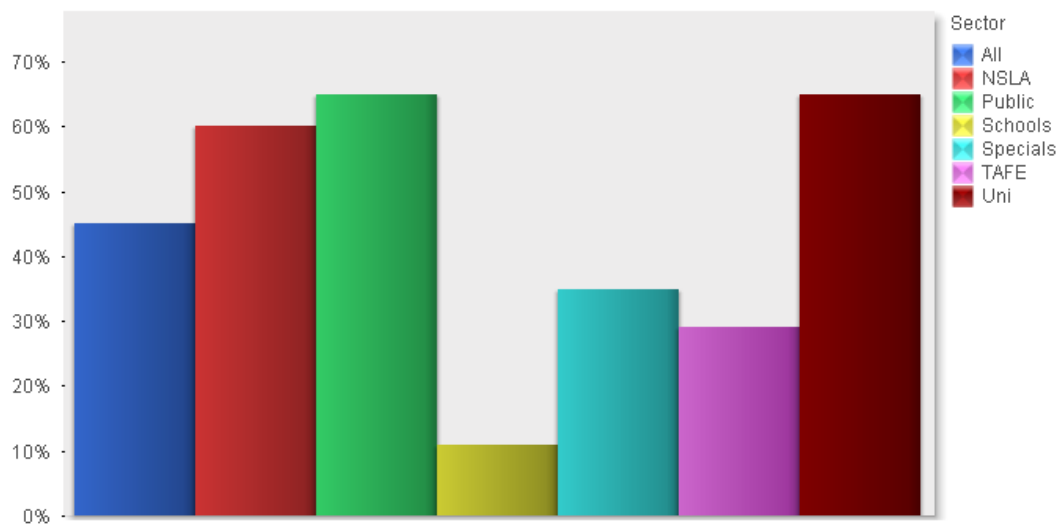


Figure 12 Institutions offering to fund study fees for university/TAFE course

Recognition of participation in staff development was generally recorded on staff files, with some evidence of in-house certification of participation and some libraries offering formal accreditation of staff development. A number of libraries encouraged internal dissemination about PD events that staff had attended:

Staff also present a precis at quarterly session to their library colleague

Recognition via staff newsletter. Fun awards – Chocky Awards

An award for the best report of an SD activity is included as part of the staff recognition awards each year.

Only 28% of LIS institutions (Figure 13) encouraged or recognised staff members' participation in the ALIA Professional Development (PD) Scheme (ALIA, ???)

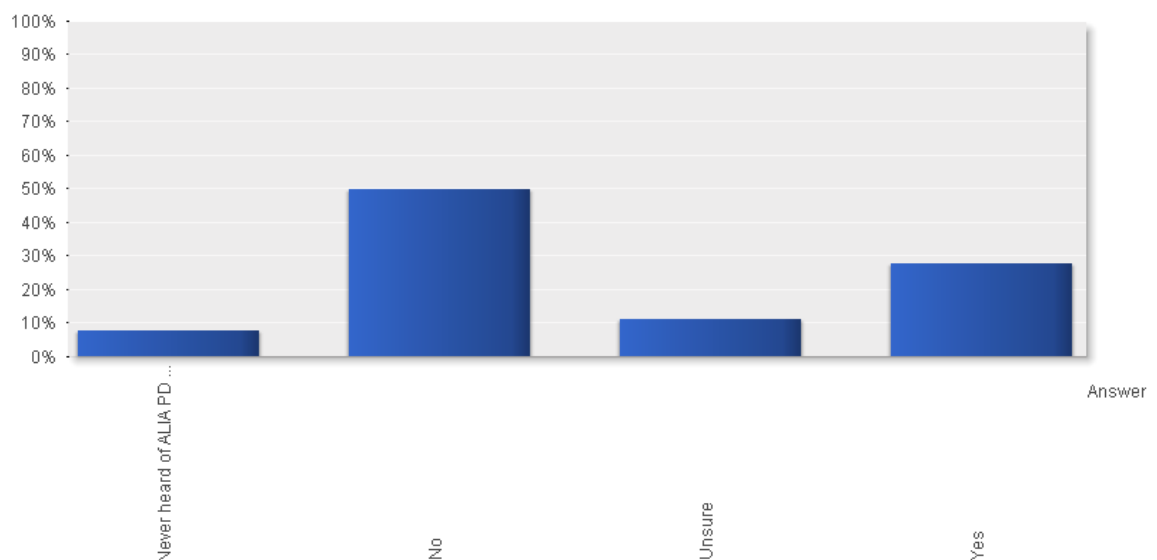


Figure 13: Encouragement or support for ALIA Professional Development Scheme

While it is generally agreed that staff development is essential in the fast changing world of work in the 21st century, with libraries investing considerable time and money into training and upskilling their staff, one third of all respondents reported that they undertook no evaluation process to consider the actual outcomes or the effectiveness of the training activities. The LIS sectors most likely to review and evaluate staff development were TAFE libraries (100%), academic and NSLA libraries (80%). Less than a quarter of school libraries and only half of public and special libraries reported that they did evaluate PD. Some of the narrative comments provided highlighted the awareness that there were shortcomings in the area and that the survey itself had drawn attention to the need to introduce evaluative processes in future.

The most common review approach was the completion of evaluation forms at the conclusion of the training event (94%). Only 30% requested completion of evaluation forms some time after the event in order to determine the enduring impact of the training. It was found that these completed evaluation forms were scrutinised by the presenter of the development activity (59%) and by the staff member with primary responsibility for staff development (59%). In only 13% of cases would the staff development committee review the evaluation forms. It was not common, however, to review the whole or indeed parts of the staff development program per se, with only about one third of respondents agreeing that they did. One comment was provided to report that there was a team-based approach to program evaluation, with reviews occurring as part of the in-house staff meetings.

Summary

At the beginning of this paper, reference was made to the value of lifelong learning to ensure that, as library and information professionals, we stay relevant to our chosen profession, as well as to our own personal careers. MacLennan's argument that "staying relevant" means that we need to commit to lifelong learning (2004) is echoed by Rupert Murdoch's challenge that "In the future, successful workers will be those who embrace a lifetime of learning. Those who don't will be left behind" (2008). The LIS profession cannot afford to be left behind, to be rendered irrelevant. The analysis of the *neXus2* data on the institutional perspective of policies and practices to foster and support staff development in the LIS sector offers some preliminary insights into the current state of play. It is evident that the larger organisations, such as academic libraries and those in NSLA consortium, are better placed to commit to ongoing training and development, with smaller libraries facing greater challenges in terms of strategic planning, financial resources and policy development. Within the LIS sector there are pockets of good practice, where there is a keen awareness that continuing professional development has a strategic value that can underpin the success of a library to face the challenges of a dynamic and ever-changing professional environment. There are also, however, some areas of concern, where libraries are seemingly operating almost in a vacuum, failing to plan for the future, perhaps in the belief that in their immediate context, the pace of change is slow, with little impact on staff knowledge and skills. Murdoch suggests that "doing more or less the same thing every day, day-after-day" can be described as "mediocrity" (2008). He argues that as a contemporary worker, "you have an even

greater incentive to invest in yourself". ALIA's policy statement clearly articulates this position:

Professional development demonstrates the individual practitioner's personal commitment of time and effort to ensure excellence in performance throughout his or her career. The dynamic and changing library and information environment demands that library and information professionals maintain and continue to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can anticipate and serve the information needs of society and their individual clients.

(ALIA, 2005)

As a professional association, ALIA has indeed "long been an enthusiastic advocate for staff development and has an active program of encouraging and facilitating continuing professional development for its members" (Smith, 2002, p.2). Professional excellence requires a strong foundation of effective staff development, which in turn depends on common philosophies and shared responsibilities, with input and commitment from the individual LIS professional, the employer, education and training providers and the professional association:

- **Individuals** have a responsibility to ensure that they acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary for professional excellence
- **Employers** have a responsibility to meet the ongoing learning and professional development needs necessary for maintaining professional excellence
- **Educators and trainers** have a responsibility to provide and promote the formal education courses and qualifications necessary for developing professional excellence
- **The professional association** has a responsibility to encourage, enable and reward the learning and professional development necessary for acquiring and maintaining professional excellence.

The *neXus2* study has captured data from a range of organisations that are representative of the Australian LIS sector, to inform the profession about the picture of staff development. The findings can serve as the basis for professional discussion and debate on the key issues and potentially encourage improved practices that will 'future-proof' the profession, to ensure that the diverse stakeholders invest in strategies to stay relevant, individually and collectively.

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